

**To:** News Media for Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Lake Counties

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## Forecast Sees Long Commutes on Narrow Mountain Roads in Wine Country

Wine Country commuters are traveling farther, on narrow roads through mountainous terrain, according to a major study of transportation, jobs and housing released today. The Wine Country Interregional Partnership completed the study of Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake Counties with a grant from the California Department of Housing & Community Development, and matching funds from Mendocino Council of Governments and Lake County/City Area Planning Council.

The study shows the number of commuters from Lake County to Napa County jumped almost 200 percent between 1990 and 2000. Napa County also saw travel rise 60 percent as workers came from Solano and Contra Costa Counties. Commutes to Sonoma County from Mendocino County were up 38 percent and from the south into Sonoma County up 52 percent.

Researchers conclude that workers are forced to travel long distances to higher paying jobs from areas of affordable housing. Lake County had the most affordable housing in the four counties and saw the greatest percentage increase in out-of-county commutes. The 101 corridor through Ukiah Valley in Mendocino County was forecast to experience growth due to relatively less expensive housing and ease of access to jobs in Sonoma and Marin Counties.

The majority of roadways connecting the four counties are two-lane, rural, substandard and pass through rugged terrain with limited sight distances and few passing lanes. The study forecasts that only a slight increase in commute traffic will create safety and access problems.

The study also noted that with no interregional transit system, there are no good alternatives to the existing roadway system.

It concludes that traffic congestion would ease if affordable housing for the region's workforce was closer to existing jobs and that Lake County needs to develop jobs to meet the needs of a rising population.

A key meeting of elected officials, industry and labor leaders, environmental experts and others will be held March 25, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at Villa Chanticleer, 1248 N. Fitch Mountain Road, Healdsburg, in an effort to find ways to bring the jobs closer to the housing or the housing closer to the jobs. All those interested in attending may contact the Wine Country Interregional Partnership at 707-463-1859 or preregister at [www.mendocinocog.org](http://www.mendocinocog.org). A nominal fee of \$50 includes lunch and copies of the presentation.

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